

Molar

Trigger warning: This short story contains themes of self-harm.

At the Votsboro Cryptozoological Research Facility where I work, we keep samples of the zombies from Fort Corpse—among other oddities. Our hope is to prevent another outbreak. (Who knows? If Fort Corpse ever stops being a tourist trap, we might even get the funding for a cure.) One sample in particular—a fragmented molar tooth from Patient Five—catches my eye on a daily basis. I cannot help but fantasize about infecting myself with it.

The deed would not require the application of much pressure; I would only need to tickle a vein with the unsmooth edge of a molar fragment until the enamel shank parted my blood vessel as if it were a pair of curtains.

As soon as the infected tooth chip dipped into the scarlet stream, I would experience an onset of terror, which I would smother with effected composure. I would bandage the cut and tell my coworkers that I had hurt myself in the kitchen. I would go to bed exhausted and acutely irritated at nothing in particular. Between one and three in the morning, I would awake as one of them, cured of overthinking.

On that day, there would probably be several lobbyists camping on my front lawn. They frequently show up to my home and my colleagues' homes, demanding for the VCRF to release 100% of its cryptid data to the public (even the inconclusive findings). I could give several of them a piece of my mind in the form of a diplomatic bite to the collarbone. By then, a local police officer would probably arrive to drill a 9mm round through my reanimated scalp.

That scenario will never *actually* play out, though. Every time I find myself lusting after the power of the molar, I end up walking away. I chose this career to help people make sense of

this chaotic world through my research. A zombified version of me would be invulnerable to physical and psychological pain, but the truly-living version of me—the version of me who takes care of himself—has the greatest potential to help people.